CLAIMS:

1. A method for automatically providing a compressed rendition of a video program in a format suitable for electronic searching and retrieval, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving electronic data representing a condensed version of a video program, said video program having a video component and a second information-bearing media component associated therewith, said electronic data representation including a representative frame from each segment of the video component of the video program and a portion of said second media component associated with said segment;

automatically transforming said electronic data representation into a hypertext format to form a hypertext pictorial transcript;

recording said hypertext pictorial transcript in an electronic medium.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said second media component is closed-caption text.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said second media component is audio and wherein said portions of said audio component are represented by hypertext anchors.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext format is hypertext markup language.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext pictorial transcript comprises a plurality of hypertext pages, each of said pages having a prescribed maximum size.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said prescribed maximum size is determined by a maximum number of frames per page.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein said plurality of hypertext pages are interconnected by hypertext links.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext pictorial transcript has at least one standard page layout.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext pictorial transcript has a user customizable page layout.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein said standard page out layout includes a subset of representative frames selected by at least one criterion that reduces bandwidth.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes substantially redundant representative frames.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of replacing said substantially redundant frames with hypertext anchors.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes alternating ones of sequentially occurring representative frames.

14. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes representative frames below a prescribed image size.

15. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes representative frames below a prescribed image size.

16. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes representative frames that differ from other representative frames by less than a prescribed amount.

17. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes representative frames taken from segments below a threshold length.

18. The method of claim 10 wherein said criterion removes representative frames taken from advertisements.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of generating and recording an index page to the hypertext pictorial transcript.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said index page includes links to individual pages of the hypertext pictorial transcript.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein said index page includes hypertext index terms indexed to pages of the hypertext pictorial transcript.

22. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext pictorial transcript has a plurality of standard page layouts selectable by a user.

23. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of transmitting said hypertext pictorial transcript over a communications network.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said network is the World Wide Web.

25. The method of claim 1 wherein said hypertext pictorial transcript comprises a plurality of hypertext pages.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein said hypertext pages are divided based on topic segmentation.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein said hypertext pages are divided based on a change in closed-caption format.

add B1

add C4